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ABSTRACT

Sixteen educational aims were rank ordered by 188 adult rural disadvantaged family members who were student participants in the Mountain-Plains Program. Results were examined by factor analysis and by the Thurstone (unweighted) scaling method; the factor structure was weak, indicating considerable independence for the individual items. Students ranked a feeling for other people, a continuing desire for knowledge, and emotional stability as their most important aims and a sense of civic responsibility and loyalty to America as their least important aims. The high ranking of personal/interpersonal aims seemed to be contrary to current thinking which assumes practical vocational needs t· be those dominant among disadvantaged populations. The study was seen as strong validation for the Mountain-Plains approach to meeting the needs of disadvantaged populations. (Author/EA)

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EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF ADULT RURAL DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

AN AFFECTIVE EVALUATION REPORT
GENERAL REPORT NO. 2
(IR-4-II-025)

JULY, 1974

A STUDY BY:

ROWAN W. CONRAD

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ABSTRACT

Sixteen educational aims were rank ordered by 188 adult rural disadvantaged family members. Results were examined by factor analysis and by the Thurstone (unweighted) scaling method. The factor structure was weak indicating considerable independence for the individual items. Students ranked a feeling for other people, a continuing desire for knowledge, and emotional stability as their most important aims and a sense of civic responsibility and loyalty to America as their least important aims. The high ranking of personal/interpersonal aims seems to be contrary to current wisdom which assumes practical vocational needs to be those dominant among disadvantaged populations.

INTRODUCTION

Research with college students has identified four student sub-cultures, the Collegiate (social), Vocational (practical), Academic (institution - identified intellectual), and Non-conformist (independent intellectual) each with their own educational aims and values (Clark and Trow; Newcomb and Wilson, 1966). Schell (1974) recently reported a four factor interpretation consistent with Clark and Trow from factor analysis of expectation items. Downey (1959) likewise used four educational value areas in surveying the aims of educators. However, no similar analysis of the educational aims of adult disadvantaged students was found in the literature (e.g. Chertow's (1974) review of the literature on the participation of the poor in the war on poverty references no such studies).

Making the assumption that education will be received, and effective, to the extent that it is congruent with the educational aims/values of the consuming student population, an analysis of the educational aims of the Mountain-Plains' student population was accomplished in order to:

1. Gain a better understanding of educational aims/values of the Mountain-Plains students.
2. Evaluate the extent to which educational offerings in the Mountain-Plains Program are in concert with student aims/values.
3. Suggest program revision[1] and/or explication where institutional and student aims/values conflict.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects were 188 Mountain-Plains students. (Nine percent of Mountain-Plains'

[1] It should be noted that a great deal of subjective information has traditionally been available to Mountain-Plains Program developers and has been employed in program revisions to date.

students are single female heads-of-household and the remainder are married couples). All subjects were young adults (average age of 26) of average aptitude (mean GATB G score of 98) and classified as rural disadvantaged.[2] All subjects entered the Mountain-Plains Program between May, 1973, and April, 1974.

Procedures. The "instrument" was sixteen educational aims taken from Downey (1959). Aims were listed individually on small identical pieces of cardboard and supplied to students in a regular stationary envelope. As part of a group counseling exercise, the envelope was supplied to each student in a counseling group numbering seven to ten students; usually during the student's first month in the Mountain-Plains Program. The counselor administering treatment explained that the goal of the exercise was for students to explore and perhaps better understand their personal aims/values in pursuing "an education." The counselor then asked the students to rank order, in terms of importance, their various aims. The ordering was then recorded on a ranking form which was used for discussion purposes, returned with the envelope containing the items at the end of the session, and subsequently given to the Counseling Aide who coded the rank data for analysis.

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[2] Selection criteria are typical descriptors of disadvantaged populations. They are elaborated in An Evaluation and Comparison of the Selection Criteria as Used in the Recruitment and Selection Process, Mountain-Plains Education & Economic Development Program, January, 1973, Revised September, 1973.

Data was analyzed[3] in two ways. First, ranks were assigned as scores and a factor analysis performed (standard principal components analysis with Varimax rotation). Second, Thrustone's "Class II, Condition B" model as reported in Torgerson (1958, p. 209) was used in scaling rank data.

RESULTS

Factor Analysis

Using the criteria of three items loading 0.40 or greater to define a viable factor, four factors emerge (Table 1).[4]

Factor One seems to be identifying asocial practical vocational educational aims with vocational guidance and job training loading positively while a feeling for other people and moral standards loaded negatively. This factor is labeled "Practical Vocational."

Factor Two seems to be identifying personal apolitical educational aims with a low positive loading on emotional stability and strong negative loadings on understanding government and world affairs. This factor is labeled, "Apolitical-Personal."

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[3] The author wishes to acknowledge the analysis suggestions and calculations of Tests and Measurements Specialist Robert M. Pollack.

[4] Two other factors emerge if an item limit criteria is not set. Factor five loads only on item ten and negatively indicating disinterest in general knowledge. The sixth factor loads positively on financial/consumer skills and negatively on "the 3-R's". Both factors seem to identify aims that are incompatible with traditional education with it's focus on general information and foundation education skills.

Factor Three appears to identify another practical educational aim in that vocational guidance is endorsed and there are strong negative loadings for a well-cared-for body, cultural activities, and handyman/homemaking skills. This factor is distinguished from factor one in that it seems to delineate aims that are less asocial/apolitical and less favorable toward extracurricular or task efforts not directly related to either interpersonal or vocational development. No single label would seem to describe this factor adequately.

Factor Four seems to be identifying intellectual aims for education in that problem solving and a continuing desire for knowledge load positively while loyalty to the American way of life loads negatively. This factor is labeled "Intellectual."

Item Scaling

Mountain-Plains students rank the ability to get along with others, a continuing desire for knowledge, and emotional stability as their most important aims/values for education. Of second most importance were specific job training and a moral standard of behavior. Also ranked above the mean were management of personal finances, occupational information and guidance, and the ability to weigh facts and apply them imaginatively in problem solving.

Least important, as ranked by the students, were understanding government and loyalty to the American way of life. Second least importantly ranked items were a well-cared-for body, handyman/homemaking skills, knowledge of world affairs, and enjoyment of cultural activities. Most favorably ranked among those aims falling below the mean in relative importance were efficient use of the three R's and a fund of information about many things.

TABLE I

FACTOR ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL AIMS ITEMS

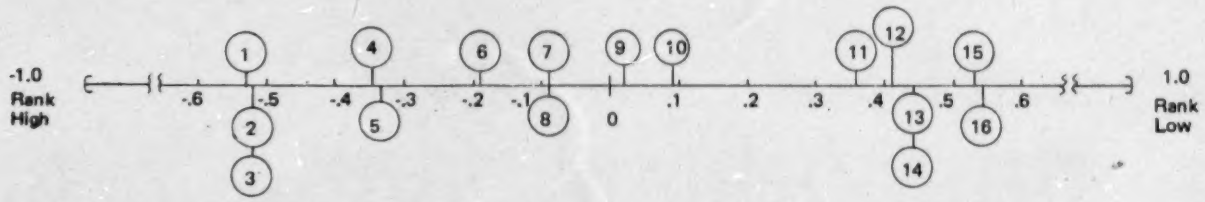
Item* Number/Rank	FACTORS AND LOADINGS I	II	III	IV	V	VI	h^2
1.	-.62	.13	.13	.07	.24	.16	.51
2.	.13	-.14	.06	.66	.05	-.32	.58
3.	-.35	.45	.35	-.04	.20	-.35	.61
4.	.72	.23	.12	.01	.18	.02	.62
5.	-.66	.26	-.03	-.28	.14	.03	.60
6.	.08	.17	-.21	-.02	-.10	.68	.55
7.	.63	.13	.46	-.06	.23	.14	.70
8.	-.05	.01	.21	.69	-.17	.35	.67
9.	.20	.08	.12	.14	-.33	-.68	.65
10.	.01	.07	.16	.01	-.89	-.03	.82
11.	-.23	.15	-.71	-.15	.08	-.01	.61
12.	.08	.13	-.57	-.11	.22	.19	.44
13.	-.09	-.86	.04	.06	.07	-.05	.76
14.	.00	-.02	-.52	.17	-.01	.17	.33
15.	.09	-.78	.22	-.20	.02	-.12	.72
16.	-.03	-.26	.21	-.65	-.05	.10	.55
Cumulative Proportion of Total Variance	.16	.27	.38	.47	.54	.61	

* Full item wording is given in Table 2.

NOTE: Item numbers in this table correspond to item ranks in Table 2.

TABLE 2

EDUCATIONAL AIM ENDORSEMENTS OF MOUNTAIN-PLAINS STUDENTS



Rank	Aim	Score (Thurstone)
1.	A feeling for other people and the ability to live and work in harmony.	-.527
2.	A continuing desire for knowledge, the inquiring mind.	-.525
3.	An emotionally stable person prepared for life's realities.	-.524
4.	Specialized training for placement in a specific job.	-.348
5.	A sense of right and wrong – a moral standard of behavior.	-.337
6.	Management of personal finances and wise buying habits.	-.192
7.	Information and guidance for wise occupational choice.	-.096
8.	The habit of weighing facts and imaginatively applying them to the solution of problems.	-.093
9.	Efficient use of the 3 R's – the basic tools for acquiring and communicating knowledge.	.025
10.	A fund of information about many things.	.091
11.	A well-cared for, well-developed body.	.362
12.	The homemaking and handyman skills related to family life.	.412
13.	Knowledge of world affairs and the interrelationships among people.	.447
14.	Enjoyment of cultural activities – the finer things of life.	.449
15.	An understanding of government and a sense of civic responsibility.	.530
16.	Loyalty to America and the American way of life.	.547

DISCUSSION

The first four factors roughly approximate the four dimension description of Clark and Trow (1966), but do not replicate them. What factor three is measuring is not readily apparent from item loadings. Since the first four factors account for less than half of the variance, (and only items 13 and 15 correlate 0.50 or better) it is concluded that the items have a high degree of independence and that the most valid and useful interpretation of educational values/aims in the population will result from examination of the individual items. This may be an artifact of the nature of ranking and score assignment as these restrict the range of correlation and thus affect the factor analysis results. In either case, the most profitable focus for interpretive attention would seem to be the Table 2 results, and pursuit of comparison of "factors" to Schell or Clark and Trow does not seem justified.

The endorsement of personal/interpersonal/intellectual aims as the primary education values of the population seems contrary to the current wisdom as regards educational needs/aims of disadvantaged populations. Even should the cautions cited below have elevated relative endorcement of personal development above that of vocational skills, the personal development value emerges much too strongly to be discounted. Although this study is population specific, should other studies show the results to apply more broadly, it has strong explanatory value as regards the "failures" of participants in the many technical centered manpower programs for the disadvantaged.

Since students know, prior to entry, of the personal/family emphasis at Mountain-Plains, self-selection to attend would seem to be the most internally consistent explanation for this value structure.[5] However, Festinger's cognitive dissonance/

[5] As other studies with other disadvantaged populations (e.g. Miskimins and Baker's (1973) study) have found psychological characteristics similar to Mountain-Plains students there is an external (literature) base to justify testing results in other settings with other sub-groups.

consistency theory also has explanatory validity. (i.e. Students tended to endorse values consistent with their current Mountain-Plains involvement.) As the instrument was administered by counselors in a counseling group the ratings may be biased by a "situational desirability response set" resulting in inflated rankings on the interpersonal facility and emotional stability items (Items 1 and 3, Table 2). What can be concluded (tempered by cautions concerning possible response set and compliance/consistency bias) is that these are the educational values of the Mountain-Plains population under treatment.

The "bottom" ranking of loyalty to the American way of life seems contrary to the popular concept of the "hard-hat patriot laborer." However, as disadvantaged populations are often disaffected with existent power structures, the low rankings on governmental understanding, loyalty, and cultural activities appear logical when interpreted in this light. However, as the ranking procedure is in essence ipsative, it cannot be stated from the data collected that any of the aims are important or unimportant to the subjects in the absolute sense. Only their relative importances are indicated.

The low interitem correlations (and concommitant weak factor structure) indicates a diversity of educational aims/values. Student goals would thus seem to argue for diversity and individual options in educational offerings.[6]

Finally, it is noted that, in light of the money spent on education/training programs for "the disadvantaged," it is surprising that these findings appear to be the first attempt to systematically examine educational values in such a population.

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[6] This finding has become a standard conclusion of late in studies of college student populations (e.g. Hoyt, 1968; Worley and Conrad, 1973; Schell, 1974), at least as regards personal/social development.

Formative Implications For Mountain-Plains

To be consistent with the educational aims/values of the students, Mountain-Plains would need to make interpersonal/emotional development and development of curiosity its first priority. The second priority or concern would be occupational training and assistance with development of moral values.[7] The third priority would be in the area of problem solving skills, vocational guidance, and financial education. Priority four would be on foundation education (the three R's) and general education (e.g. GED preparation, etc.). Lowest priorities would be on government, patriotism, physical education, etc.

Essentially this seems to agree with Mountain-Plains emphasis and with priorities as regards allocation of resources. For example, Mountain-Plains investment per student hour is highest in personal development counseling (the student's major aim) and investment in physical recreation is low, and recreation participation is strictly voluntary (a minor student aim). Quantitative measures of priority (e.g. expenditures, staffing levels) are misleading since currently there seems to be no adequate way to quantitatively access the amount of resources necessary to meet the need. However, the individualized program approach contains an automatic mechanism for balancing needs and resources to the extent that available resources and student needs/demands on those resources are equalized.

Although assessment is subjective, Mountain-Plains educational aim/value priorities and student aim/priorities seem to be unusually congruent.[8]

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[7] Not to be confused with inculcating institution determined moral values.

[8] Whether this is because Mountain-Plains has discovered the educational essentials for the population, or whether the recruitment/selection process is effective in discovering students to fit the "discovered essentials" cannot be stated with certainty. This, however, does not decrease the importance of the finding of extremely high institutional and student congruity.

As Mountain-Plains philosophy and policy is in accord with the major findings (personal development emphasis and individualization) there appears to be no major conflict or necessity for major adjustments in priority.[9] Rather, the study is seen as strong validation for the Mountain-Plains approach - especially as compared to other approaches purporting to meet needs of disadvantaged populations.

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[9] Cautions and qualifications as regards cognitive Dissonance/Consistency are of no "negative" program consequence. In fact, endorsing values as reported and participating in the program as structured, cognitive dissonance/consistency arguments now tend to reinforce the reported value pattern. (It could also be argued that if students did not like/agree with the treatment that the corresponding aims would have been rated lower.)

These qualifications do have importance as regards extrapolation of results of a population not yet under treatment. For example, they may not hold true for the control group, and in fact assessment of aims of the controls could help give answers as to the importance of the cognitive dissonance and/or "I didn't think about it before, but now that I've tried it, I like it" interpretations.

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APPENDIX A

Table 3. Educational Aim Frequency Distribution

ITEM*	RANK																TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
1	23	25	24	22	15	19	11	8	8	9	5	3	6	1	2	1	182
2	31	23	18	19	22	11	5	4	13	5	15	2	5	4	2	3	182
3	35	26	12	11	11	25	10	9	9	9	1	8	9	3	1	3	182
4	25	11	17	10	10	13	11	9	12	6	9	16	15	10	6	2	182
5	13	20	21	15	15	11	6	10	8	12	10	10	8	9	8	6	182
6	6	7	13	15	17	12	15	20	13	14	12	14	11	8	4	1	182
7	8	13	11	12	11	11	18	12	10	16	12	11	14	8	11	4	182
8	3	10	6	12	18	14	28	15	15	14	12	10	7	10	4	4	182
9	4	9	22	11	9	10	12	17	12	11	14	12	10	10	10	9	182
10	6	10	6	11	14	9	12	12	13	21	12	12	17	13	7	7	182
11	8	7	9	13	9	6	10	14	11	10	11	9	10	12	13	30	182
12	6	7	5	2	6	9	12	13	13	9	18	15	20	13	17	17	182
13	2	5	5	8	9	12	12	10	8	14	12	10	16	15	24	20	182
14	2	0	8	6	5	7	12	17	11	15	17	20	12	12	21	17	182
15	0	3	2	5	7	8	4	5	14	11	11	15	18	29	32	18	182
16	9	5	4	10	4	4	4	7	10	6	10	14	7	26	21	41	182

* Items are defined in Table 2.